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C O N F I D E N T I A L BRATISLAVA 000276

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [ISAF](#) [NL](#) [LO](#)
SUBJECT: SLOVAK GOVERNMENT APPROVES NEW MANDATE AND
MISSIONS FOR SLOVAK TROOPS WITH ISAF

Classified By: Ambassador Vincent Obsitnik for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary. The GoS approved a proposal on June 11 to increase Slovakia's contribution to ISAF up to a total of 246 soldiers, including 24 troops who will operate without geographical caveats. Defense Minister Baska has said he plans to increase the number of Slovak troops serving in ISAF to 280 during the current election cycle, and to send combat forces after the next elections in 2010.

¶2. (U) On June 11, Slovakia's government approved a proposal from Baska to "change the mandate and number of members of the Slovak Armed Forces, and to complete the operations of the Health Team of the Slovak Armed Forces, in Operation ISAF in Afghanistan." Pending Parliamentary approval, the proposal calls for Slovakia's contribution to grow to a maximum of 246 soldiers, with deployments scheduled to take place in 2008-2009. Under the new mandate:

- Up to 57 engineers will remain at Kandahar Air Base
- Up to 6 soldiers will be assigned to Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs); these soldiers will be authorized to operate in the entire operational zone of ISAF
- Up to 15 soldiers will be assigned to Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) in Uruzgan in cooperation with the Dutch; these will be sent in three six-month rotations
- Up to 6 soldiers will serve at ISAF headquarters; these soldiers will be authorized to operate in the entire operational zone of ISAF
- Up to 12 soldiers will be assigned to a new National Support Element (NSE) to provide direction, logistics, and personnel and financial support to all Slovak soldiers in Afghanistan; these soldiers will be authorized to operate in the entire operational zone of ISAF
- Up to 50 soldiers for a guard unit to secure "Holland Base" within the perimeter of Forward operating Base (FOB) Ripley in Tarin Kowt; these soldiers will fall under Dutch command
- Up to 50 soldiers for a guard unit to operate within the perimeter of Kandahar Air Base in close cooperation with the Canadians
- Up to 50 soldiers to guard Camp Hadrian in Uruzgan Province; these soldiers will fall under Dutch command

Under the current approved mandate, Slovaks will contribute 115 soldiers by the Fall 2008 to Afghanistan with the bulk going to support the Dutch.

¶3. (SBU) In a press conference following the government session, PM Robert Fico predicted easy Parliamentary approval since the new mandate does not include combat troops, troops will serve only in defined geographic areas and, unlike Iraq, ISAF is a NATO mission with a UN resolution behind it. It is not clear when the proposal will be approved by Parliament. The preliminary agenda for the next Parliamentary session has already been published. Although it could change, Post rather predicts the proposal will be approved in Parliament's 25th session from September 9-25.

¶4. (C) Baska told the Ambassador on June 9 that he would not

propose sending Slovakia's Special Forces to ISAF until after the next general election, which should be held in 2010. Baska said that insufficient training and equipment are the reasons for not proposing to send Special Forces sooner, but when pressed by the Ambassador, he acknowledged that the 2010 general election is the critical factor. In January Baska spoke publicly about the possibility of sending combat troops to Afghanistan in the future and was promptly and publicly overruled by the PM. On June 10, during an inspection of the MoD, the PM again said that he "disagrees with sending combat troops that would carry out combat operations in which the health and lives of our soldiers would be threatened."

15. (U) Fico and Baska both said on June 10 that Slovakia has no plans to reach NATO's defense spending target of two percent of GDP in the near future. Fico said that he considers the current budget sufficient for the coming period. Baska added that "we are not going to abide by the two percent of GDP at all, we are not the only country not to meet those two percent."

OBSITNIK